

Theol. burial.

24

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

St. Mary-le-Bow,

T O T H E

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

Janu. 3. 170³/₄.

By RICHARD WILLIS, D. D.
Dean of *Lincoln*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

Published at the Request of the said
S O C I E T I E S.

LONDON, Printed for *Matthew Wotton*,
at the *Three Daggers* near the *Temple-gate*
in *Fleetstreet*. 1704.

K



ACTS X. xxxviii.

— *who went about doing
good* —

THESE Words are spoken of our Blessed Saviour, and I have made choice of them at this time, as being very proper both for this solemn Season, in which we Commemorate the great Blessing of his coming into the World, and for the Business which is the Occasion of our present meeting together. Our business is a business of *doing Good*, one of the greatest Goods we can do in our Stations to our Church and Nation, and certainly we cannot desire a better Example than

that of our Blessed Saviour either to incite or encourage, or to direct us in it.

I shall therefore in my present Discourse, First, take notice of this Great Example, and then proceed to other matters proper for our present consideration.

I. We may observe that our Blessed Saviour has by his coming into the World, and taking upon him our Nature in order to our Redemption and Salvation, given us the greatest Example of Love, and the Noblest Pattern of *doing Good*, that can be proposed to us. This is not indeed what is peculiarly meant in the Words of my Text, That referring only to the Course of his Life and Actions while he Lived here in the World, of which I shall speak presently; But the greatest act of Beneficence and Kindness that ever he shewed was in undertaking the great Work of our Redemption.

Redemption. He *went about doing Good* while he lived in the World, but the Benefits of those particular Actions were in a great measure confined to those particular Persons with whom he conversed; but the business for which he came into the World was intended for a Blessing to Mankind, and to every Man and Woman in the World, that will but receive his gracious Offers of Mercy. And if we may Lawfully compare the Acts of God and prefer one before another: there seems to be more Goodness, at least more sensible Goodness and Kindness in the Redemption, than in the first Creation of the World. When God Created the World he seems to have had no other Motive but his own Goodness, that he might communicate Being, and some degrees of Happiness to such a number of Creatures; but still this was a Work of *Majesty*, and besitting the *greatness* of an Omnipotent Being. But in the Work of
our

our Redemption the Case was otherwise, Here was Infinite Goodness, and Infinite *Condescension* joyned together ; tho' the Deity cannot properly suffer, yet the Majesty of the Son of God seems for some time to have been veiled and covered ; The Scripture tells us, that he *Humbled himself* ; That *being in the form of God he took upon him the form of a Servant, and humbled himself, and became Obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross.*

This certainly was the greatest Condescension as well as Mercy and Pity that ever was shewn, that the Eternal Son of God should in Order to recover us, take upon him our Mortal Nature ; and that in the meanest Circumstances and outward appearance of it, and in that Nature suffer the Contradiction of Sinners, and at last undergo a Cruel and Ignominious Death. I shall make no other Reflection upon this but in the Words of the
Apostle

Apostle upon this Occasion, *Phil. 2. 4, 5. Look not every Man on his own things, but every Man also on the things of others; let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

2. The next thing to be considered in the Example of our Blessed Saviour, is the Course of Life he was pleased to make choice of when he appeared in the World. He did not so much consider what way he was like to bring most Esteem and Reputation to himself, as what way he was most likely to do Good to others; and therefore did not choose a Life of great Corporal Austerities, of rigid Fastings and Mortification, and of Retirement from the World, and all the Thoughts and Conversation of it, which things are apt to raise a great admiration in the Minds of Men; but he chose rather to converse familiarly and easily with all sorts of People in Order to do them Good, and to that end he mixed sometimes

times even with their Feasts and Entertainments. He was Meek, and Affable, and Courteous, and Communicative; and indeavoured that way to bring Sinners to Repentance. He had great Pity and Commiseration for the Infirmities and Afflictions Men laboured under, and therefore made even his Miracles Subservient to their Relief; He Healed the Sick, and the Lame and the Blind, and cast Devils out of those who were possessed by them.

He might, if he had pleased, have made choice of Miracles that should have more astonished the World, than most of these did, and perhaps have raised himself more Esteem and more Followers for the present.

But his Business was not only to confirm the Truth of what he Preached by his Miracles, for which those were sufficient; but also to give a great Example of doing good to all succeeding Gene-

Generations, and to shew us that that is the best Life which is most useful, and does most good in the World. Not that Christians should so far lay out their Thoughts in doing good to others, as in the mean time to forget themselves; no, it is very necessary also to retire frequently for Prayer and Contemplation, that we may recollect our selves, and prevent the dissipation of our Thoughts, that we may raise our Souls, and keep up a Heavenly Frame and Temper of Spirit; that we may renew our Zeal, and preserve the Sincerity of our Intentions, and procure the Blessing of God upon what we are doing. In a word, as a Life of Contemplation without exerting our selves to do good in our Stations, tends frequently to Idleness, and vain amusement of our Thoughts, and is in it self an uncharitable neglect of our Brethren: So on the other side, a Life of Action without frequent seasons for Recollection and Prayer and Meditation, is a great neglect

glect of our selves, while we pretend Charitably to look after other People, and ends often in Hypocrisy and private Designs. The true Christian Life therefore should be a mixture of both, as the Life of our Blessed Saviour was, but with this difference, that his desire of doing Good while he was in the World seems to be the most Conspicuous Character in it.

3. The next thing that I would observe of our Blessed Saviour, is that he was not discouraged from doing good, notwithstanding all the Opposition and Evil Surmises and Censures he met with. He *went about doing good*, tho' they put an ill Construction upon every thing he did; if he cast out Devils, they said it was by *Belzebub the prince of the Devils*, if he Conversed freely with Men in order to reclaim them, they said he was a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*. When he cured the Sick, and the Blind, instead of
owning

owning the Hand of God in it, they accuse him for breaking of the Sabbath-day. But notwithstanding all this yet he still persisted: And when *Jernsalem* remained Obstinate after all he had done, he only pities it and Weeps over it, *O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

To conclude all in one Word, as he was contented to do good notwithstanding all the Ingratitude and evil returns he met with, so he did at last lay down his Life in the same Cause. All this he underwent to do us good, and therefore I hope we shall not grudge a little of our pains and charge to carry on those good Designs, for which he did and suffered so much.

I shall now take notice of some of those Ways or Instances, wherein more especially we ought to do good to others, and whereby we may best serve
the

the Design of our present meeting together.

1. We ought, as Providence puts it in our Power, to do what good we can to the Souls of Men ; and as this is really the greatest good we can do them ; so there is no Man but may one way or other be serviceable in this respect. He to whom God has given Riches, or Honour, or Power, or Learning, may by these Advantages well improved, have a much larger Influence in doing good to Men's Souls than others can have, and that is the best use he can make of those Conveniences ; but there is not the poorest Man living but may under God's Grace do somewhat that way, he may give a good Example, he may pray for the Soul of his Neighbour, and talk tho' homely, yet so heartily and experimentally about the things of another World, as to convert his Brother from
the

the Errour of his ways, and so do the
greatest Charity for him.

It's true that the Souls of Men are
the special Province of those who are
peculiarly set apart for that purpose,
and they ought above all Men to make
the good of Souls their business who
have such a charge committed to them.
but the Design of God in setting Men
apart for this Work was only abundant
caution, that what is so precious in
his sight might not perish for want of
care, not to excuse Men either from
looking after their own Souls or doing
what they can for the good of others.
And indeed if doing good be our Duty,
what greater can we do than by being
any way Instrumental toward the Sal-
vation of Souls? If Charity be our
duty, as certainly it is, what greater Cha-
rity can we do to any Man than this;
to do what we can to make God his
Friend, to put him in the way to Hea-
ven, and prevent all those Evils that
Sin

Sin would bring upon him? This is certainly the greatest Charity, and the greatest Good, as much greater than any Worldly Good, as Eternity is more considerable than this short Life, and as much as Heaven or Hell are of greater concern than any condition here.

This I have the rather insisted upon, because it's what many that yet have some sense of doing good, are apt to pass over as what does not belong to them, but to those whose more peculiar business it is.

But certainly so good a Work must belong to every body to whom Providence gives an opportunity of helping it on, as he has done it more or less to all Mankind.

It is not every Bodies business publickly to Preach the Gospel, but 'tis his business who has Children to breed them

them up in the Nurture and Fear of the Lord, to try to make them good betimes, to Pray for them, to instill good Principles into them, and as much as he can to provide for their Souls as well as their Bodies.

2. It is his Business and Duty who has Servants to see that they serve God as well as him, to restrain them from Wickedness, and encourage them in doing Good, and to resolve with *Joshua* that not only himself, but his House all that belong to him shall serve the Lord.

3. It is the Business of him that is a Magistrate, or to whom God has given Power and Authority and Reputation in the World, to make use of those advantages to restrain the Wickedness of Men, to prevent Publick Scandal, and to encourage those that do well. 'Tis certainly the Duty of such Persons, tho' they cannot prevent all

Vice, yet however to see that wickedness, shan't openly and publickly brave it, that it shan't grow impudent and barefaced, and run down Piety and Religion. In short, 'tis the Duty of those in Power and Authority to stand up for the Cause of God who gave them that Power, to be Men of Piety and Religion themselves, and to do what they can that other People may be so too.

4. Again, 'tis the Duty of a Friend to do what good he can to him whom he Loves, and therefore certainly to endeavour to save his Soul by all the methods which he thinks may work upon him; the contrary would be the greatest sign of hatred he could show, and accordingly God himself looks upon it as such; *Thou shalt by no means hate thy brother, thou shalt not suffer sin upon him*; and indeed, What could we do more if we did hate him than quietly to let him undo himself, if

if we can probably judge it in our Power to prevent it? there is but one step of Malice further, and that is to joyn with him, and incourage him in it; which yet, God knows, is the work but of too many professed Friends.

5. Lastly, 'Tis methinks the Work of common Humanity, if we do believe there is another World, and that Men must be Happy or Miserable there for ever according as they live here, to indeavour as much as in us lyes to bring them to that happy State, and to keep them out of that place of Torment.

Sin has so many Evils of all sorts attending it, that mere pity should make us do what in us lies to free the World from it. And a great deal of this might be done without setting up for the Office of Ministers, would Men, as I have shewed before, do the Duty of good Fathers and good Masters, of good Magistrates, and

good Friends, of good Men, and good Neighbours.

I shall add only these Two Considerations on this Head, and then proceed;

1st, That Wicked Men are, I won't say so Zealous, but so Busie and Active in promoting Wickedness in the World, in procuring Companions in Sin, and in making Lewdness and Debauchery easy to Mens Consciences; that the World will be in great danger of being over-run by it, if those that are good won't in some proportion endeavour to stop the Torrent; and take some pains to reclaim, as well as others to corrupt and debauch those about them. And certainly this is one of all the causes in the World that Men need not, and should not be bashful in; for it is to be ashamed of doing the best Work they can do, it is to be ashamed of the Cause of God, and of their Religion, for 'tis Piety, and Vertue, and the

the Fear of God, that are our Religion more than any particular Opinions, and he that's ashamed or afraid to Profess and Practice those himself, or to Promote them in others, is truly ashamed of Christ and his Word; of which I shall say nothing but the Words of our Blessed Saviour himself, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my Word in this Adulterous and Sinful Generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his Glory before his Father and the Holy Angels.*

2dly. The 2d. Consideration I would propose is this, that many of us heretofore may have been too instrumental in the Devil's Service, and contributed towards the Corruption of the World, and the loss of Souls, by our Influence or Authority, or evil Example; and therefore, as God expects we should make reparation for wrong done according to our Power; it lies upon us to undo this as much as we

B 3

can;

can; especially to endeavour to bring over those Persons we may have been the means of Corrupting; but if that be now out of our Power either by reason of distance of place, or diversity of condition, or because they are already entered upon their unchangeable State, or so hardened in Sin that we cannot do any good upon them; yet however still Reparation is to be made to the World for the Mischief and Disorder that may have been caused by this means, and especially to our Saviour Jesus Christ for the weakening his Kingdom, and the loss of those Souls he Died to save.

This is a Consideration should make Men have a care how they give an ill Example, or tempt others to Sin; because they may by it do a great deal of mischief they may never be able to repair again, which will make their Repentance much more severe, and will lye very heavy upon their Conscien-
ces

ces when they come to have a true Sense of Things.

But especially it should move those who heretofore have been so unhappy, but are now by the Mercy of God come to themselves, to endeavour by a great Zeal in doing good, to make amends for the Evil and Mischief they may have been the causes of.

Thus I have done with the first way of doing good, that to the Souls of Men. The next that I shall mention is of a mixed Nature, but which we may call doing good to the Publick, of which I shall name some Instances.

1. The first is faithfully to discharge any Office or Trust, our Prince or Country shall repose in us; Not neglecting our Charge through Idleness or Carelessness; Not suffering our selves to be corrupted by base self-Interest and the love of Gain; Or terrified from

steddily doing our Duty for fear of
 the Frowns of great Men, or popular
 Clamour; or Misrepresentations; or
 letting our selves be led aside by a Par-
 ty to serve the Interest of a Faction in-
 stead of that of our Country, or any
 thing else of that kind; But steddily
 acting in all our Stations as an Honest
 Conscientious Man should do, making
 it our great Care how we shall best
 manage and do most Service in the
 place we are in. Which would Men
 generally do, the Publick must needs
 be happy. But however the part e-
 very Man has to Act towards making
 it happy, is to manage well that Trust
 he is Imployed in whether great or lit-
 tle; and he that neglects or abuses that
 does his part to undo it. And it does
 not much matter whether this be done
 by Corruption or by Idleness; for the
 harm is the same, and the Trust is e-
 qually neglected; and to neglect a
 Charge committed to us is Knavery
 and Treachery, let the Principle be
 what

what it will it's done upon. Not only a Corrupted, but an Idle, Careless Officer, or Magistrate, or Minister is as much a Knave, and, if well Considered, Acts as dishonourably and basely as he that Cheats his Neighbour, for indeed he cheats the Publick, or his Prince that imployes him, takes the Honour or the Profit without paying the true price of it; which is carefully doing the Duty annexed to it.

2. There is another way of doing good, tho' differing from the former, yet of near affinity with it, and that is by Faithfully and Conscientiously discharging any Honorary Trust and Confidence reposed in us. For Instance, a Man is intrusted by Law to provide for such or such Places, or has a Vote in the Choice of such or such Magistrates, or has his Princes Ear, or the favour of great Men, by which he has the Opportunity of recommending Men to the Service of the Publick; such a Person
may

may by Conscientiously discharging such Trusts as these do a great deal of good, and this is what Justice and Honour and Honesty require from him. And to abuse such a Trust as this by commending unworthy Persons, such as are not like to do good in their Places, or serve for the Honour and Advantage of those that employ them, is Baseness and Perfidiousness. If it be done for the love of Money, this is downright to sell the Publick, or his Prince that intrusts him; if it be to serve a Friend, or to return a Kindness, which are somewhat more plausible Causes; yet however this is still to prefer our Friend before the Service of our Country, and the Sacredness of a Trust reposed in us; 'tis for the sake of one Friend to betray another, who for that very reason because he trusted us, did not deserve to be so served. In short, to return a Kindness by advancing an unworthy Person is to pay our own Debts at the expence of the

the Publick ; and to prefer an Undeserving Friend to a Charge before a Person that may do the Publick Service, is to abuse the Venerable Name of Friendship, to make it a Bond of Iniquity, and a pernicious thing to the World ; for such Friendships are only so many Conspiracies against the good of Mankind.

To Conclude this Head, As the Good and Happiness of a People depends upon the Care and Honesty, and Fitness of those employed in Places of Trust of all sorts, so whether these shall be Fit and Honest, depends upon those who are to provide and nominate ; and therefore we cannot any way do more good to the Publick than by being Conscientious in the discharge of such Honorary Trusts.

3. Another thing we owe to the Publick, is not only Faithfully to discharge all Trusts or Offices we shall take upon

on us, but to be willing for the Publick good to renounce our own ease and quiet in many Cases, and to take such Charges upon us in which we may do God and the World Service, tho' it be against our own Humour and Inclination, and it may be advantage too. This is a piece of Generosity, it must be confessed, not much to be expected from the present Age, which is sunk so deep, as into most other Vices, so especially into the great one of a narrow selfish Humour, and unconcernedness for the Publick; we reckon it now very fair if a Man will do so much for a gainful place as to be Faithful to it; and not out of Idleness or Corruption betray his Trust; and the Course of the World would go much better on, would the generality of Persons employed do this. But certainly a Generous Man, and much more one that guides himself by Christian Principles would have a regard to the Publick tho' he don't find his own particular account

count in it any otherwise than in the Publick Good and Safety; But especially this is a Duty incumbent upon those who enjoy the benefit of a large Fortune, for as they generally are by their Education better Qualified to serve their Country, and have more leisure for it than those who must spend their time in some Calling in Order to provide for their Families, so their Obligations to their Country are greater, because they receive more from it; They enjoy greater Plenty, and more Honour than others under the Publick Protection, and therefore ought in Gratitude to repay it by a greater degree of their Care and Concern to do it Service.

4. The last way I shall mention of doing good to the Publick is, that tho' we have no Hand in Publick Offices or Affairs our selves, yet we should do what we can in our Private Capacity to encourage those who are Zealous to
put

put Laws in Execution for the Publick Good; especially for the suppressing of Prophaneness and Immorality, as being one of the best Services they can do, both for the Church and the Kingdom; Our Duty with respect to such Persons is to Honour and Esteem them, to give them the Praise that is due to such worthy Designs; To put the best Construction upon their Actions, and by doing what we can to make the thing Honourable to encourage others to the same Zeal.

It has been a great Discouragement to such good Designes, that if Men are active to put Laws in Execution they must provoke a great many whose Interest, or whose Appetites are to be controuled and restrained, and such as these will be Clamorous and Noisy, and they will always find some to Countenance them who affects the Reputation of being Wise by doing nothing, and by neither giving themselves nor
any

any Body else any trouble. And therefore on the other side all that wish well to so good a Work should stand up in their Defence, and give them their due Praise, and make this, which is indeed the Cause of God, Honourable in the World.

It is indeed the Duty of good Christians to be Zealous in the Service of God whatever Treatment they meet with, to go through *evil Report* or *good Report* themselves, so they can but bring Honour to God; and I question not but there are a great many who would do it, and cheerfully too. But I am sure it is not for the Honour of God, or the Good of the World that they should be put upon this Trial. No, to respect such Persons is what the good cause they are engaged in requires from us, and what we ought in Gratitude to pay those who are the Instruments of doing good to the World.

It

I would now in the last place address my self to those worthy Persons who are more particularly concerned in the occasion of our present meeting together, Whether Magistrates, or Assistants to those good Designs by their Advice and Contributions, or lastly those who by their Pains and Trouble in giving Informations enable the Magistrates more effectually to do their Duty.

Your good Designs and the good Effects of them are now so manifest that I need not give any particular account of them, and much less need to say any thing in their defence; what you have already done, and what you are still doing does not require an Apology, but the Praise and Thankfulness of all good Men, of all those that wish well either to Religion, or their Country; which I hope you have, and their Prayers too, that God would

would increase your Numbers, and strengthen your Hands, and give a Blessing to your Endeavours.

I have all along hinted at many Arguments which may encourage you *not to be weary in well doing*, and therefore shall now only propose these two Things more to your Consideration, and so conclude.

1. The first is this, That tho' the Work, in which you are engaged, be in it self a Work of *Justice*, yet it is also a Work of the greatest *Charity*. It is great Charity to the Souls of Men, to their Bodies, to their Families, and to all that belong to them, all which are great Sufferers by Vice and Immorality. It is frequently a great Charity and Kindness to the Offenders themselves, who may be amended, or at least restrained by the Correction of the Law: but it is always a Charity to our Country to prevent Disorders in
C it,

it, and to many particular Persons who may be kept within Bounds by the Example of the Punishment of others.

It is true indeed that Human Laws and Punishments are not proper means to *Convert* Souls, and to make Men sincerely Good; *that* requires a higher Principle, and other sorts of Motives: but it may be a Charity to Men to be restrained, tho' they are not quite converted; it is something, to have fewer Sins to answer for in the other World: but besides, we find that the greatest part of People are corrupted by having Temptations laid open and easy before them, and are by this means brought to many Sins which otherwise they would not have thought of, or at least not have attempted; of which we have a sad Example in and about this great City, where, by reason of the Multitudes of People, opportunities of most Vices are easier,
and

and Persons may more easily conceal their Sin and their Shame than they can in other places, and therefore do frequently in confidence of this venture upon Sins which without this Temptation they durst not, and would not have attempted. Let us add to this, that when once a Man has lost his Innocence, and corrupted his Conscience, no Body can tell where he will stop; it may be not till he has undone Body, and Soul, and Family, and Estate, and all that belongs to him; all which might have been prevented by removing the first Temptation out of his way.

To Conclude this Head; As a prudent restraint may preserve a Man's Innocence, and prevent his Corruption, so it may bring him to Consideration afterwards, and by that be the beginning of a sincere Conversion. When a Person finds his way hedg'd up with Briars and Thorns, it may make him think of returning, and be more ready

C 2

dy to hearken to the Monitions of his Conscience, and the good Advice of Friends or Ministers, and we have frequent Instances of the Conversions of Men which have had their beginning upon this Bottom; and therefore the removing Temptations, and the making Vice difficult and uneasy by the execution of the Laws against it, is upon all accounts a great Charity.

2. The other Argument I would make use of to encourage your Zeal is this, That the engaging the Authority of the Law, and the Power of the Magistrates against Immorality and Prophaness, is the most likely Method to prevent the Judgments of God, which they may otherwise bring down upon our Church and Nation. It is the Opinion of some great Divines, that the Method of God's dealing with Nations and Societies of Men is different from that of his dealing with particular Persons. As for particular

lar

lar Persons, they have immortal Souls, and are capable of great Happiness or Misery in another State; and God has told us, that he intends there to Judge them, and to assign them their Portion according as they have behaved themselves here; and therefore by this he seems to be more at liberty, as to his Dispensations with them in this World, that he is not bound in Justice to punish them, but as it shall answer some other Wise Designs of his Providence: but as for Nations and Societies of Men, they say, That as their chief End is Happiness in this World, so they cannot be called to Account, be rewarded or punished in the other; and that therefore if they come to be generally corrupted, they have more Reason to fear an immediate Vengeance.

So much of this Opinion is certainly true, that National Sins deserve National Judgments; and unless God have some other wise Ends of his Pro-

vidence to serve by sparing such a Nation, will very likely bring them down upon it; upon which account the best Service we can do our Country is to endeavour by a general Reformation to appease the Wrath of God : but if that cannot be done, however to turn the Edge of the Law, and the Authority of the Nation against Sin and Wickedness, which if we do, we have Reason to hope, that tho' the Offenders may be many, yet that God will not look upon the Wickedness to be National, nor Punish the whole for it, but let every Man bear his own Burthen, and the Guilt follow only the particular Offenders.

We have in the History of the Old Testament many Evidences of the Mercy of God, and of his unwillingness to give up a sinful People, and what great regard he has in this matter to the Zeal and Prayers, tho' of a few, good Persons. But I shall at present content

tent my self to take Notice only of one Instance, as being most proper to the matter which we are speaking about, and that is the History of the Zeal of *Phineas*, and the good effects of it, of which you have a large account in the 25th Chapter of *Numbers*.

I would not determine how far that Fact of his was of an extraordinary Nature, or how far it may be imitated by others in like Circumstances ; that being not material to our present Business, which requires only legal Judicial Proceedings : but that which seems to have been so pleasing to God was his hearty Zeal to execute Judgment, overlooking all Difficulties and Dangers that stood in his way, about which give me leave to observe these few Things.

I. We may take notice that tho' all the Congregation of the Children of

Israel are said to be *weeping before the Door of the Tabernacle*, humbling themselves before God, and deprecating his Anger, yet their Deliverance is not ascribed to that, but solely to the Zeal of *Phineas* in executing Judgment, as you may see *ver. 11. Phineas the Son of Eli-ezer the Son of Aaron the Priest hath turned my wrath away from the Children of Israel, while he was Zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the Children of Israel in my jealousy.* It is, no doubt, the Duty of all good Christians, to humble themselves before God, as for their own Sins, so also for those of the Church and Country to which they belong, and to endeavour by their Prayers and Tears to stand in the Gap, and to avert his Judgments; and I hope we shall all of us be ready to comply with the pious Intentions of her Majesty, in appointing a Day of solemn Humiliation to this End: but let us to our Prayers and Fasting add a Zeal and Jealousy for the Honour of God. *Phineas*

neas not only prayed; but executed Judgment; and so the plague ceased.

2. The second thing I would take notice of is, that this his Zeal not only stopped the Plague among the People, but did also procure the Blessing of God to himself, to his Family, and to all his Posterity; as you may see *verse 12. Wherefore say, Behold I give thee my Covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his Seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood.* This looks the more remarkable, because the particular Fact for which it was given, was the imbruing his Hands in Blood, which in it self should rather have unqualified him for the Holy Office of the Priest-hood; as we see *David* was not permitted so much as to build a Temple, tho' he would have been at the Charge and trouble of it, because he had been a *Man of Blood*: but we see by this, what great regard God has to

to a courageous and a holy Zeal; God saw the Purity of his intentions, the Sincerity of his Heart, and the fervour of his Affections, for the Honour of his God, and the service of his Country, and therefore rewarded the Action, which in other circumstances had been unfit for him to do, with a Blessing upon himself and all his Posterity.

3. We may take notice that the Honour of the High-Priesthood did for some Generations continue in his Family, according as God promised, till the time of *Eli* who was descended from *Ithamar*, the youngest Son of *Aaron*. Upon what occasion it was then taken out of the Family of *Phineas* we do not Read, no doubt it must have been some great provocation which moved God to withdraw a Blessing, so solemnly promised.

But that which I would chiefly take
notice

notice of in this matter is this, that as God was pleased for the Zeal of *Phineas*, to settle the High-Priesthood in his Family, so for want of Zeal in *Eli* he quickly took it away from him, and restored it again to the Family of *Phineas*, which enjoyed it almost as long as their Constitution and State lasted. *Eli* seems to have been Personally a good Man : but the thing that God lays to his charge was, that *His Sons had made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* 1 Sam. 3. 13. He did not effectually make use of that Authority which God had given him, either to reform or punish them, and therefore God punishes him together with them for it, and deprives him and his Family for ever of that Honour which he had thus debased by his easiness to his Children.

4. The last thing I would observe is this, that this Zeal of *Phineas*, which
you

you see had such great Effects, was only the Zeal of a single Person; which should be a great encouragement to us, to do our Duty, and to be Zealous for God and Religion, tho' we have not so many to joyn with us, as we might perhaps desire. I am afraid that a great many are 'apt to be discouraged by thinking that all they can do will signifie very little as to the main of Affairs, that if the World be wicked, it is like to be so still, when they have done all they can, and that if God be angry with us for our Sins, it is not a single Person, or a few that can turn away his Wrath; such thoughts as these, I doubt, make too many lie quite still, and neglect to do what otherwise they might and would do: but we ought to remember, that if every one should make this excuse for himself, as it is certain one may make it as well as another, the World would quickly be a sad place, and much worse than it is;
and

and on the other side, did none discourage themselves by this, it might quickly be much better. We ought all therefore chearfully to do our Duties in our several Stations, and leave the event to God. It is not any one Soldier in an Army, that can, tho' by the greatest Valour, do much toward the Success of a War: but if every one should under that pretence excuse himself, they would then all together do nothing. We cannot tell how much good a Man may do in the World, that does heartily and seriously set about it: or how few People, that do with Zeal and Vigor set themselves against the wickedness of the Times, and heartily interceed with God, may turn his Wrath away from us.

Let us all then be persuaded, as we value our Religion, and our Country, and every thing that is dear to us, to endeavour to continue God our Friend,
who

who has by so many Mercies and Deliverances shewed us how much he is concern'd to do us good, and how unwilling he is to give us up. We cannot but be all sensible what marks of his Displeasure we felt in the late dreadful Storm, and in what a critical Posture our Affairs now stand, and therefore how much it concerns us to make our Peace with him, lest he quite give us up.

To Conclude all in a Word, We have this further encouragement to do our Duty, that if God should, for the sake of those that are good among us, think fit to spare us, yet they, who do by their ill Lives and Negligence their part to provoke his Wrath, shall have all the Guilt of it to answer for in another World: and on the other side there is this comfort for those who do endeavour to stand in the Gap, that if notwithstanding all they can do yet Iniquity
does

does still so abound, that God shall think fit to give us up, their labour shall not be lost; God will either save them from the common Calamity; or bless them under it, or, which will be better than all, by it bring them to Heaven.



FINIS.

**BOOKS Printed for Matt. Wotton at
the Three Daggers in Fleet-street.**

AN Address to those of the *Roman Communion* in *England*, occasioned by the late *Act of Parliament* for the further preventing the *Growth of Popery*.

Reflections upon a Pamphlet, Intituled, *An Account of the Growth of Deism in England*. Together with some Considerations about the *Christian Religion*.

A Sermon preached at *Whitehall* before the *Lords Justices of England*, upon *Sunday, July the 12th, 1701*. Published by their Excellencies Special Command.

Reflections upon *Mr. Toland's Book* called *Christianity not Mysterious*; with some Considerations about the *Use of Reason* in matters of *Religion*, in a Letter to a Friend.

A Sermon preached before the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, at their first *Yearly Meeting*, on *Friday February the 20th, 1702*. At *St. Mary-le-Bow*.

A Sermon preached before the *Lord Mayor* on *Easter-Tuesday, 1702*. A *Spittal-Sermon*.

Concio ad Sanctam Synodum, ab Archiepiscopo, Episcopis & Clero, *Provinciae Cantuariensis* celebratam, Habita in Ecclesia Cathedrali *S. Pauli, Londini* 20 Die *Octobris, A. D. 1702*.

These Seven Written by the Reverend *Dr. Willis*
Dean of *Lincoln*.

A Guide to Repentance, or the Character and Behaviour of the devout Christian in Retirement; By *John Inett, D. D.* Chanter of the Cathedral Church of *Lincoln*.